2. Sexual Life between Maturity and Marriage

836 After reaching maturity, the girl is called ngɔ̄n III, and the young man nkɔ̌ɔ́ I; for both there is also the term bandʉ̌man, [984] plural of ndʉ̌man = young man or girl at the age of being in love. Thus the name itself shows under what sign the subsequent period of life is lived. Free love in the boldest sense of the word prevails. The girl may give away her favors without inhibition to whom and whenever she desires to do so, and she need only ob- [833] serve the religious rule that prohibits sexual intercourse during the [885] day and the social rule that prohibits intercourse between blood relatives. Otherwise there is no barrier; members of the same age group come together and make thorough use of their freedom. In the initial period after maturity, to be sure, sexual desire is dampened by the moral admonitions of the cults with their proclamation of the sinfulness of sexual intercourse. This sinfulness, combined with physical satiety and psychic revulsion, produces a "moral hangover"; however, such considerations and feelings are soon overcome. As in eating, so in their love life, the Pangwe know no moderation. They empty the cup of joy to the lees. Later on, especially when the Pangwe has acquired several wives, he tends to develop a more business-like attitude towards sexual love, in place of the youthful amours which alternate unsteadily between ungoverned passion and its aftereffects, psychic unease.

In view of this extensive free love, it goes without saying [585] that the virginity of his future wife plays no role in the man's choice. Indeed, the presence of a hymen (ajádebǎ) is usually scarcely noticed and /254/ to some is totally unknown. Around the age of 15 years it is supposed to be destroyed by boys of the same age.

833 As for their libidinal drive, the girls are generally not in- 936 ferior to the boys. However, we may say that for the girls potency [572] alone is as a rule the deciding factor in the choice of a friend. This fact is well expressed in the various dance songs at the Mbale [161] (which, incidentally, were brought to the Fang and Ntum by the sexually loose Jaunde) as, for example, in the following complaint.